



BLM FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of the Interior • Bureau of Land Management • Washington, D.C., Office • 1849 C Street N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Renewable Energy on the Public Lands

As the agency responsible for managing over 245 million acres of public land, the BLM is front and center in the national effort to increase energy production from the renewable solar, wind, and geothermal resources found abundantly on the public lands. The President's "New Energy for America" plan has established national goals of producing 10 percent of the Nation's electricity from renewable sources by 2012 and 25 percent by 2025. State renewable energy portfolios, investment tax credits for solar energy projects, volatile oil prices, and international concern about global warming have all contributed toward public and industry interest in utility-scale solar energy development. In 2012, the BLM will be giving priority status to 17 projects (9 solar, 6 wind, and 2 geothermal) representing about 7,000 megawatts. The BLM developed this priority list in collaboration with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, with an emphasis on early consultation. The 2012 priority projects were selected based on a variety of criteria, including progress of the necessary public participation and environmental analysis under NEPA and applicable state environmental laws. The BLM also used the screening criteria for priority solar and wind projects, developed through BLM policy memoranda issued in February 2011, to assist in evaluating and prioritizing the projects on its 2012 priority list.

1. Solar Energy

Solar radiation levels in the Southwest are some of the best in the world, and the BLM manages more than 20 million of public lands with excellent solar potential in 6 states: California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. State renewable energy portfolios, investment tax credits for solar energy projects, volatile oil prices, and international concern about global warming have all contributed toward public and industry interest in utility-scale solar energy development.

On December 17, 2010, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy as co-lead agencies published the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States. The Solar PEIS seeks to establish, for the first time, a solid foundation for long-term, landscape-level planning to help facilitate better, smarter siting of utility-scale solar projects that avoids or minimizes conflicts with important wildlife, cultural and historic resources. A Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS published on October 28, 2011 responds to extensive comments on the Draft PEIS and proposes incentives for solar developers who site projects in solar energy zones -offering reduced permitting times - and a sufficiently flexible variance process to allow development of well-sited projects outside of zones. The Supplement also makes clear that the solar program will continue to incorporate other parallel planning efforts, including state level efforts, to establish additional solar energy zones to meet market demand. Publication of a Final PEIS is scheduled for July 2012.

In 2010, the BLM approved the first utility-scale solar energy projects on public lands. To date, it has approved 15 such projects that include all of the technologies considered to be commercially viable (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and photovoltaic systems). The projects range in size from a 45-megawatt photovoltaic system on 422 acres to a 1,000-megawatt parabolic trough system on 7,025 acres. These 15 projects have the potential to generate over 5,000 megawatts of clean, renewable energy—enough energy to power over 1.5 million homes—and to create over 10,000 jobs.

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2. Wind Energy

The Bureau of Land Management manages 20.6 million acres of public lands with wind potential. The BLM has authorized 198 rights-of-way for the use of public lands for wind energy site testing or development. Of these, 29 authorizations have a total installed capacity of 437 megawatts.

A PEIS relating to the authorization of wind energy projects was completed in June 2005. This EIS provides an analysis of the development of wind energy projects in the West. In conjunction with the publication of this EIS, the BLM amended 52 land use plans to allow for the use of applicable lands for wind energy development. BLM offices are able to use this EIS as an aid in analyzing impacts for specific applications for the use of public lands for wind energy use. The BLM issued a wind energy policy in December 2008 to provide guidance on best management practices (BMPs); measures to mitigate potential impacts on birds, wildlife habitat, and other resource values; and guidance on administering wind energy authorizations.

The BLM continues to conduct studies necessary to evaluate and process applications for rights-of-way for the siting of wind energy projects and applications for rights-of-way for electric transmission lines from these projects. The BLM currently has some 45 pending wind energy development applications on the public lands with a potential capacity of over 7,000 megawatts. Since 2010, the BLM has approved three wind energy projects on public lands in California, Nevada, and Oregon with a combined potential to generate 440 megawatts of clean, renewable energy—enough energy to power over 150,000 homes—and to create nearly 1,000 jobs.

3. Geothermal Energy

The BLM has the delegated authority for leasing on more than 245 million acres of public lands (including 104 million acres of National Forest managed by the U.S. Forest Service) with geothermal potential in 11 western States and Alaska. The BLM currently manages 818 geothermal leases, with 59 leases in producing status generating about 1,275 megawatts of installed geothermal energy on public lands. This amounts to over 40 percent of U.S. geothermal energy capacity and supplies the electrical needs of about 1.2 million homes.

In May 2007, the Department of the Interior published final regulations on geothermal energy production on public lands requiring more competitive leasing, offering simplified royalty calculations, and sharing \$4 million per year in current royalties with counties where production occurs. A PEIS to assess geothermal leasing on the public lands was completed in October 2008. The subsequent Record of Decision amended 114 BLM resource management plans and allocated about 111 million acres of Bureau-managed public lands as open for leasing. An additional 79 million acres of National Forest System lands are also legally open for leasing.

Since 2010, the BLM has approved eight priority geothermal projects on public lands in Nevada with a combined potential to generate 407 megawatts of clean, renewable energy—enough energy to power over 400,000 homes—and to create 700 jobs.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.blm.gov>.